

Chapter 3: Organization, Use/Relationship and Amendment of the General Plan

Organization of the General Plan

The main body of the general plan document consists of the stated goals and the nine plan elements that implement the goals. Chapter 1 (Purpose and Goals) incorporates the written set of 17 primary goals. These 17 goals provide the guiding principles for the update of the general plan and provide the framework for the plan's objectives and policies.

Chapter 4, Plan Elements, contains the nine general plan elements and the series of objectives and policies which support the 17 goals and carry out the general plan. The general plan land use and circulation maps are graphic illustrations of the written goals, objectives, and policies regarding the city's physical and socio-economic environments during the next 20-plus years.

The history, present and future setting of the development of the city including population projection and various urban form alternatives considered during the general plan process were included in the previously published March 1997 Working Papers for Fresno General Plan and have been updated in the plan environmental impact report.

The environmental impact report (EIR No. 10130) document, which is included as an addendum, contains the draft and final report together with comments and responses, environmental mitigation measures, and the findings required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and its implementing guidelines. This report identifies the potential environmental consequences of adopting and implementing the 2025 Fresno General Plan (Exhibit 4) and identifies measures to reduce these environmental impacts when feasible. Also included in the appendices is the West Area Community Plan (Appendix W) goals, objectives, and policies, the "Landscape of Choice - Principles and Strategies" (Appendix A) and the related Ahwahnee Principles (Appendix B). The submitted modifications to the initiated general plan update are included in Appendix C and Appendix D and E are maps illustrating the city's existing redevelopment plan and specific plan boundaries, respectively. Appendix F shows the proposed alternative locations for designated public school sites which have more than one preferred location and Appendix G is a map illustrating conceptual land use and circulation patterns for the proposed Southeast Growth Area. Appendix H is a large-scale representation of several of the existing and developing communities in the counties of Fresno and Madera that are of concern to the Fresno region.

The nine plan elements are summarized in the Table of Contents. Of the seven plan elements required by state law, land use and housing are incorporated in the Urban Form Element; circulation is incorporated into the Public Facilities Element; open space is incorporated into the Open Space/Recreation Element; the Resource Conservation Element is contained as an independent element as are the Noise Element and the Safety Element.

The identified planning issues for each of the nine plan elements include a discussion of the challenges, direction, and relationship of the plan element to the 17 general plan goals. Each plan

element also contains a listing of objectives and policies which are the city's official position on development and resource management. The objectives represent generalized statements of plan issue resolution, describing the desired end results for each issue. As general commitments of the city, the policies provide direction on how to achieve the stated objectives, including when appropriate, projects, programs, regulations and activities to carry out the policies.

Use of and Relationship between the General Plan and Community/Specific Plans

The general plan addresses all nine plan elements on a citywide basis. The city's community (Exhibit 2) and specific plans (Appendix E) are intended to focus on specific elements or areas/communities of the city. It is important that the user of the general plan document understand the relationship of the general plan to the community and specific plans, especially when the question in hand relates to the determination of consistency of a proposed land use for a particular parcel of land with adopted general plan policies.

The city's Local Planning and Procedures Ordinance (Article 6, Chapter 12, Fresno Municipal Code) defines the relationship of the general plan to the adopted community and specific plans by establishing a priority order of plans. The ordinance requires that a decision relating to (1) the consistency of a zone district, density, land use, or land use intensity to a plan designation, or (2) the conformity of the location and nature of a public facility, street, or other component of a plan be governed by the following order of priorities.

1. The provisions of the pertinent specific plan; or,
2. The provisions of the pertinent community plan, in the absence of a specific plan; or,
3. The provisions of the general plan in the absence of a community plan and a specific plan. Where the provisions of an applicable community or specific plan do not cover a particular plan consistency question, the decision or determination of that question shall be governed by applicable provisions of the general plan.

In addition, the Local Planning and Procedures Ordinance, as well as the provisions of the city's Zoning Ordinance, mandate that all development proposals be consistent with the general plan (see Table 2). Therefore, based on the above-noted priority of plans, the plan user with questions regarding proposed development projects will have to refer to applicable policies of the appropriate community and/or specific plan as well as the general plan.

It is also noted that several major modifications and amendments to the general plan have been adopted by the city council since adoption of the 1984 Fresno General Plan. Major amendments include defining of the mid-rise/high-rise corridor policies, refining the Air Quality Element with the air quality improvement program, defining the mineral resource conservation and recovery policies, and adoption of a policy requiring sidewalk and park strip installation on residential streets within subdivisions. Newly adopted plan elements include the Master Parks Plan and a Master Multi-Purpose Trails Manual. The goals, objectives, and policies of these amendments and modifications have been incorporated, where appropriate, into the 2025 General Plan.

Since the adoption of the 1984 Fresno General Plan, the City Council has adopted several community and specific plans. These plans include the Bullard Community Plan (1988), Woodward Park Community Plan (1989), Central Area Community Plan (1989), Roosevelt Community Plan (1992), Fresno Air Terminal/Yosemite International Environs Area Specific Plan (1987 amended 1997), Yosemite School Area Specific Plan (1988), Tower District Specific Plan (1990), Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan (1995), Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan (1996), and Fresno-Chandler Downtown Airport Master and Environs Specific Plan (1999). Unless they are specifically amended at the time of adoption of the 2025 General Plan, the provisions of these plans will remain in effect for the properties within their respective plan boundaries as the Local Planning and Procedures Ordinance provides that a community or specific plan is not automatically amended upon the adoption of a general plan.

In order to maintain internal consistency between the community and specific plan documents and the general plan document, the appropriate provisions of the community and specific plans have been incorporated into the 2025 General Plan map and text. Also, Appendix W contains the objectives and policies for implementation of the West Area Community Plan upon adoption of the 2025 Fresno General Plan.

How to Amend the General Plan

As discussed above, all proposed development projects and land uses, either public or private, must be found to be consistent with the general plan policies (and applicable community or specific plans) in order to be approved by the city. If a proposed project or land use is found to be inconsistent, then the general plan must be amended or the proposal will be denied. Any citizen or organization may apply to amend the text and/or maps of the general plan document and related community plan or specific plan documents. The city council, planning commission, or the director of the Development Department may also initiate amendments to the general plan. The amendment process is detailed in the Local Planning and Procedures Ordinance.

Plan amendment requests are reviewed in public hearings by both the planning commission and the city council. The public hearings are advertised in local newspapers and mail notices are also provided to individual property owners within prescribed distances of the subject property. At the conclusion of the city council hearing, the council is required to take final action to adopt, reject, or modify the proposed amendment to the general plan. In addition, the Local Planning and Procedures Ordinance requires that a plan amendment request denied by the council not be reinitiated by the applicant or the director of the Development Department during a period of one year from the date of the denial of the previously requested amendment.

The 2025 Fresno General Plan is not intended to be a static document, especially in light of its approximately 20-year planning time frame. The general plan also cannot identify and resolve all of the planning issues that may surface during the next two decades. The plan document, therefore, must be continually monitored and amended when necessary to address the changing needs and desires of the community. In fact, the Local Planning and Procedures Ordinance mandates that the general plan, in its entirety, be reviewed, updated, and amended as necessary at intervals of not more than ten years. However, a policy of the Implementation Element of this update will require update of the general plan at intervals of no longer than five years.